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THE PLACE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN A COMMERCIAL CITY.



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BY

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The Place of the University in a Commercial City.

This is to be—not an address—but an after-dinner talk. The trouble about it is that it has a title. Such talk, as you all know, is always about everything in general and nothing in particular. And after-dinner talk should never be left in the hands of one man. When such a thing happens, that man is always voted something of a bore. If I monopolize the conversation for a time to-night, you know you have only yourselves to blame.

And on looking at it again I find the title—since there had to be a title—a rather pretentious one for such a talk as I am about to give. But after all it only conceals one's natural inclination to speak to others about what interests one most. *The Place of the University in a Commercial City*. I know that University. There is no deception. They asked me to go down to St. Louis last year to give a ten minutes talk on *The University*, meaning the ideal University, the pattern of which—as Plato would have said—is laid up in Heaven. I couldn't go, but in replying I assumed—with a deliberate and calculated facetiousness—that they meant McGill.

There—the name will out! I understand that at your last meeting Mr. Hays was discoursing to you about the Grand Trunk Pacific. He couldn't keep away from it either! If you had got me to speak about railroading, and Mr. Hays to speak about McGill, I am sure you would have added to the gaiety of your evening's entertainment. You all know that our great railroads have lately become—through the action of Sir Thomas Shaughnessy and others—mere departments of McGill. We are talking now about getting a new building up at McGill for the Transportation School, and shall easily be able to provide accommodation for the Head Offices of both roads—the Grand Trunk and the Can-

adian Pacific Railways—under one roof. I ought to have brought a map with me. I am told Mr. Hays had one. It would have been quite the thing to take a pointer and show you McGill as it is to-day, and as I hope it will be, say, ten years after date. The only difference between Mr. Hays and me is that he has got all the money he wants for his new road, and I don't know which way to turn to keep McGill going even on present lines.

Well, as I said, I know the University; sometimes I am inclined to think that I know a good deal more about it than I want to. And you know the Commercial City, so between us we ought to be able to hit it off. I have done ten years now of life in Montreal; and all the time I have tried to keep in view that somewhat obvious fact that if university people have much to teach such a community as this, they have also something to learn from it. When we began work in the University College of Dundee, good old Principal Tulloch addressed us in words which I have always liked to keep before me: "Nowhere does the school of life afford a better training in the qualities of prudence, good sense, sagacity, keeping your own counsel and doing your own work without too much fuss than in a thriving mercantile community. No qualities can be more useful or wear better than these, and I fear it is possible to pass through any college, or even to teach in a college, without sometimes having a conspicuous share of them." You know too how Cecil Rhodes gently satirized the Oxford dons when he said that college people know nothing of affairs, and are "as children in finance." Well, that is not the danger from which we suffer up at McGill. We have to keep a pretty sharp lookout on our finance up there. What Sir John A. Macdonald called the two worlds of LL.D.'s and L.S.D. are not so far apart from each other up at McGill after all. For myself, I can say that my activities are so varied—I deal in so many different lines of goods—that I consider myself thoroughly qualified to become the managing head of any great departmental store. There is no fear of any one in my position, or with my duties, becoming what Lord Palmerston contemptuously called (speaking, by the way, of Germany) merely a "d——d Professor."

If I know the University, you know the City, and it is this that lends such a piquancy to our meeting here to-night. We Professors live up on the heights, and seldom find it necessary to go down town at all, except in the course of the arduous and unequal struggle to pay our monthly bills. You are down town all the time, engaged in acquiring a superabundance of dollars such as may set you free from all these anxieties. And then we meet. You have made your pile, and you want to consult me as

to what you shall do with it, or some of it,—what channel of benevolence and public spirit you should select in which to cause the golden shower to flow. Can there be any doubt as to my reply?

One of my colleagues who recently left Montreal to return to Kingston spoke, with much praise for McGill itself, of the "depressing unsympathetic plutocratic atmosphere" with which it has to contend in the city of Montreal. What can he have meant? Montreal prides itself on what it has done for its English-speaking University. Our existing prosperity is the result of the benefactions of various Montreal families and individuals, whom it would be superfluous here to mention. On the other hand, I could cite you the names of many citizens who, dying within the last ten years, have left millions of dollars behind them, without appearing ever to have given much thought to the higher interests of the community in which they had amassed their wealth. And what of the rank and file? Perhaps Professor Macnaughton meant that the rush of life and the scramble for a bare existence is so great in this city that many people have hardly the time to think of higher things. You know how powerfully he preached the gospel of culture, and how he protested against the view that the true end of education is to make money. Such a view cannot be accepted even for the professional departments which it is our duty as well as our interest to foster in a commercial community such as this. Perhaps all that Professor Macnaughton meant to plead for is a little more sympathy—on the part of all classes of society—with the work which McGill represents and with the workers who are carrying it on. On their behalf I shall venture to assert—and the future will prove my statement true—that not the least of the obligations which this community is incurring in connection with higher education to-day is towards that body of men who, with next to no margin of profit, after providing themselves with the necessities of life, are content to toil on from year to year at the subjects with which they wish to have their names identified. College work, as we know it in McGill, is just about the most unremunerative service of modern times. I sometimes tell my colleagues that the one reward they are sure of is that—if everything goes well—they may have their names mentioned in the evening paper thirty years after date. A recent writer—who can speak with some authority on the subject—has gone so far as to say that the great fabric of higher education "owes its existence in great measure to the willingness of college professors to bear a great part of the cost." Their salaries, small enough to begin with, show little disposition to keep pace with the increased cost of living and with the higher standard of attainment that is nowa-

days required of any one who offers himself for college work. "Preparation for college teaching," says the same writer,¹ "is more exacting than that for any other profession, medicine not excepted. The prospect of spending seven years in preparation, of working afterwards as an assistant for several years at a salary of \$700 or \$800, for several years more at a small advance, and of attaining at middle age a salary not much greater than the wages of a switchman in an eastern railway yard . . . is by no means alluring to a man unwilling to remain celibate through life."

It seems to me that this is a condition of things which needs a little ventilation and discussion, especially in a community which affects to believe that its University is rich beyond the dreams of avarice. I do not know what harm may not have been done by the oft-repeated statement that McGill is amply provided for out of the abundant means of her wealthy benefactors. Individuals cannot be expected to do everything, no matter how wealthy they may be, and it is a very poor form of gratitude which suggests that they should be called on to do more. I look for an alleviation of present conditions in a more widespread appreciation throughout the community of the needs of our University, and a bridging of the gulf which sometimes exists between professors, as men and as workers, and the citizens among whom they are living and working. Meanwhile, it is well that I should take this opportunity of stating the fact: so far from being excessively rich, there are many departments, as I could easily show you in detail, in which Old McGill is at a standstill,—for want of money.

The explanation is, of course, to be found in the manifold variety of our present operations, and also—paradoxical as it may seem—in the very success which has attended them. That success itself creates new necessities. There never was any need for regarding universities as fashioned in the same mould, and the university in the commercial city has long ago overpassed the limits of the old Arts College. So much is this the case that our enterprising American friends have actually sought to establish a new connotation for each of the words *college* and *university*, different from that which has been in use in other countries. In cases where the designation of *university* is something more than merely a "majestic synonym" for *college*, it implies in America the presence of professional faculties. And the tendency in these professional faculties is to follow the example of Germany, and to insist on a college degree as a prerequisite for entrance.

¹ Professor John J. Stevenson, "The Status of American Professors," *Popular Science Monthly*, December, 1904.

We have not got that length in McGill yet, though a growing number of our students voluntarily take the Arts course first. But it has come to be the established system at Harvard for Law, Medicine and Technology; at Columbia for Law, and at Johns Hopkins for Medicine. The great danger at the present time is that the pressing demands of commercial life, and the intensely practical attitude which is forced as a consequence on American higher education, may interfere with the natural course of development along this line, and may result in an excessive curtailment of the period of academic training. Few who know the conditions of our own country will feel any surprise that so many of our young men have been in the habit of hurrying at once into the professional faculties without over-much preliminary education. The country had need of them, and they made haste to reach their goal. But there is less reason now — especially with a well developed Faculty of Arts — why McGill should continue to run the risk of turning out uneducated specialists. Those of you who know our medical student, for example, will not be sorry if he takes to heart the advice he is likely to get from Dr. Osler next month, and devotes a little more time than has been altogether usual hitherto as to the needs of preliminary training.

But I must not be understood to be saying a single word in disparagement of our professional faculties. It is one of the great discoveries of recent years that there is no reason in the nature of things why chemists and miners and engineers of all kinds should not be just as cultured as doctors and lawyers. And so their training has now a definite place in all broad university systems. Take our own Faculty of Applied Science, and the splendid record it has achieved within comparatively few years. We are looking for a great development in the prosperity of this department of our work. If it could be properly cared for now, it would become one of the greatest centres for such teaching on the whole American continent. With adequate accommodation, it could easily double the numbers of its students. As regards medicine, I am not sure that we have not already just about as many doctors as we want. What we need is a better training for the best of them. But there is practically no limit to the number of young men whose services will be called for by this great and growing country in the field of industries and manufactures. It will be with us just as it has been with Germany and the United States, where the phenomenal increase in the number of students enrolled in schools of technology and in university faculties of applied science during recent years, is a good index of the marvellous development of the scientific and industrial activities of both nations.

And yet there are some who profess to fear that we are over-educating our people. There might be some ground for this if we were seeking to drive all students into what used to be called the "learned professions." But, as to over-education in general, let Germany give its answer. It is calculated that in Germany during the last thirty years the number of men of university training (including schools of technology, mining, agriculture, forestry and veterinary science) has doubled itself. The industrial life of this country has gone on developing in close contact with its academic life. The practical undertakings of German captains of industry rest on a solid basis of scientific training. Nowhere has the truth more fully emerged that Law and Medicine and Theology are not now the only technical applications of academic studies. Germans recognize the fact that it is the abstract and theoretical learning fostered by the university that supplies the basis on which rest all the marvels of modern scientific activity. And no expense is spared to carry out the work. You have heard how the great railroads of this country have recently combined to found, in connection with our Faculty of Applied Science, a department of Railroad Engineering. But in Germany this sort of thing is going all the time. Take the manufacture of explosives. Rival concerns combined some year ago, knowing how much they depended on high science, to subscribe about half a million dollars, and to found close to Berlin an institution which they called their *Central-stelle*. This establishment, "maintained by subscription at a cost of about £12,000 a year, is presided over by one of the most distinguished professors of chemistry in the University, with a staff of highly trained assistants. To it are referred as they arise the problems by which the subscribers in their individual work are confronted, and by it is carried on a regular system of research in the field of production of explosives, the fruits of which are communicated to the subscribers." (Rt. Hon. R. B. Haldane, M.P.)

But with all this Germany does not make the mistake of forgetting the things of the mind. To show you where the danger lies here, I want to read you something which recently appeared in a Canadian journal. True, it has reference only to school education, but, after hearing the extract, you will ask yourselves what we may look for if such things are to be done in the green tree. *Canada First*, p. 10: "I visited once, some years ago, a high school in a little Ontarian country town, situate in the midst of a great stretch of beautiful and fertile soil, all of it arable, much of it wooded, and bordering on a bountiful and navigable lake. Its head-master told me, evidently with pride, that his upper classes were reading Plato's *Laches*, and Tennyson's *The Princess*, a

Medley. Some day, perhaps, some one will have the sense to substitute for Plato and Tennyson, tuition in intensive farming, scientific dairying, stock-raising, horse-breeding, poultry-keeping, fruit-growing and preserving, bee-keeping, pisciculture and fish-curing, and forest-conservation. I should think the sooner that day comes the better."

In opposition to this, let us not forget that intellectual advancement may well go hand in hand with practical activity. In Germany the application of the highest knowledge to commercial and industrial enterprise is not allowed to obscure the claims of pure culture. That is an end in itself, and if it is to be realized in its greatest perfection it must be sought in and for itself. In the schools of our Province, conditions would be worse than they are at present if the writer of the extract just quoted were allowed to have his way. What we need in our schools is not a longer list of subjects, but some method which shall secure that the pupils know a few things well. The instruction given should be more thorough and less diffuse. It saddens me to realize at times the contemptuous attitude of persons who think they know what ought to be taught in schools towards some of us who are professionally identified with teaching interests. The country districts, for instance, are jealous of the control which the university rightly claims to exercise over the whole school system of the Province. Not more than 5 per cent. of the pupils, they say, are going to the University; therefore the University should leave the 95 per cent. alone! Two points of view occur to me here: First, that so far as true education is concerned, the needs of the 95 per cent. are not really so different after all from the needs of the 5 per cent.; and, secondly, that the University which would seek to set up an impassable barrier, as regards entrance, between the majority of the scholars and the smaller remnants, in estimating the results of efficient school-teaching, would stamp itself as hopelessly out of date. But this is a subject which is more proper to the atmosphere of teachers' conventions than to this. I shall only repeat that the influence of a modern and well-regulated university ought to be allowed to permeate all strata of the educational fabric.

This reminds me to refer to the new outlook that has opened up for common school education in Quebec since Professor Robertson was authorized to make the announcement of Sir William Macdonald's benevolent intentions in regard to it. Let me here quote what has been appropriately said by one of my University colleagues — Professor Cappon of Queen's College, Kingston — in praise of our greatest educational benefactor: "His name will remain honourably identified in the minds of his countrymen with educational work in Canada when that

of many a politician now occupying much of the public attention will be mentioned only to illustrate the curious psychological features of the political corruption of the age." (*Queen's Quarterly*, January, 1905, p. 315.) Not the least important feature of the new order of things is the proposed transference of the McGill Normal School to Ste. Anne; and with the guarantee of continued University supervision and control of the work of training, I am sure that this change to improved conditions will be hailed with the greatest satisfaction by all who are interested in the educational progress of our Province. As to the new College of Agriculture, I cannot claim to speak with the same authority. It had always been one of my pious aspirations that the McGill Faculty of Comparative Medicine and Veterinary Science should rise again, as it were, from its ashes, and recommence work on a larger scale; and this need will, no doubt, not be lost sight of by the new foundation. It used to be said in Scotland that the path was well-trodden from the university to the farm-house. Sir William is engaged in building a road *back to the farm*, and when agriculture has been rendered increasingly profitable by the larger use of scientific methods, farming ought to become as attractive to our young men as other avocations are at present.

I had almost forgotten to say a word on another subject which has been recently much in my thoughts—the possibility of instituting a commercial course at McGill for young men who intend to follow a business career. Provided the standard of entrance could be maintained, it would be comparatively easy to add to the subjects of the first two years of the Arts course, which already includes such essentials as History, Modern Languages and Mathematics, teaching in Commercial Geography, Descriptive Economics, and so forth, leading to a diploma conferred in connection with our present Intermediate Examination. With the co-operation of employers, hours could also be arranged for further study in the succeeding years of the curriculum,—including Political Economy, Economic History, Accounting, Mercantile Law and Practice, Banking and Insurance, and the principles underlying successful business management. Such a department, centering around our School of Economics and Political Science, might provide more or less systematic training also in the methods of government and administration, in statistics and social investigation, in the study of the municipal system and the legislative control of industry and commerce. I am a believer in the possibility of inspiring, through education, that feeling of unity which is so indispensable in members of the same civic community, citizens of the same state, joint heirs of the same imperial heritage. Who can doubt, for example, that some of the problems that confront us in re-

gard to Imperial questions at the present moment, as well as those likely to develop under the surprising changes that are going on in the Orient, might be more efficiently solved if a greater proportion of our people were brought into intelligent touch with the interests which such problems represent? The self government on which we rightly insist should have a sound basis of education to support it. The relations of the British Empire to its colonies, and its best methods of dealing with foreign countries—such subjects are best understood by those who have made a special study of them, and especially those who have had already the advantage of gaining some instruction in such branches as Economic Science, Political and Commercial History and Commercial Law. Such a start has lately been made in the University of Birmingham, although that University is still without the two chairs of History and Economics of which McGill can boast. It should not be above our capacity to organize something of the same kind for Montreal. There are in this city, as in most other cities of the same size and importance, "men of business skilled in finance, in banking, in exchange, great organizers and administrators, experts in various lines of commerce," who might be willing perhaps, as visiting lecturers, to devote some portion of their time and energy to the training of our youth. Where that has been attempted elsewhere, the process has been found to be mutually beneficial, for those who undertake the task of instructing others soon realize that there are few things more truly educative than the attempt to put one's own ideas into conscious order and expound them to others.

To conclude:—Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the universities on this side of the Atlantic is their breadth of aim. They train for citizenship. They are not a thing apart as universities were in former days, remote from the life of the people. And they try to inculcate the duty of taking an interest in affairs, with the view of shaping public opinion and influencing public action. To quote Professor Macnaughton: "The Universities are here mainly to supply the nation with more light. No doubt it is also part of their business to provide men equipped to render to the community particular services requiring special knowledge and technical training. But their highest and most characteristic, their indispensable function, is the general and wider one, namely, to turn out men of disciplined intellect." To those who bear this truth in mind it must be obvious that the disparaging talk to which we have sometimes to listen in regard to old-world centres of education is not always well founded. For it must be admitted that tried by this test of the service they render to the nation, Oxford and Cambridge are not found wholly wanting. Though local conditions may seem to us, in

a great commercial centre, to impose limitations and restrictions on their work, the English universities can claim that they have helped to realize the aspirations of the *Bidding Prayer*, used every Sunday before the University sermon, "that there may never be wanting a due supply of persons qualified to serve God in Church and State." But it is more by influencing the privileged few than by getting at the masses of the people that they do their direct educational work. In the past their influence on the governing classes has been conspicuous. It is bound up with the residential system, which is so potent a factor in social training, and in the moulding of character. It was this, as well as his own connection with Oriel College, that turned Mr. Rhodes's thoughts to Oxford, though we know from his will that he might otherwise have preferred Edinburgh.

That brings me to the question of residences for our students, a pressing need, the supply of which would enable us to show that our interest in our young constituents does not confine itself to the lecture rooms and laboratories. Instruction is given there, but I do not know of any one who would hold that the class-room is a completely equipped field for the training of the character. In this aspect McGill is only a step-mother to her children. She leaves them, so far as residence is concerned, to find lodging where they may. The great gift of the Union or Club-house, now in course of erection at Sir William Macdonald's expense, will furnish a valuable counter-attraction to the cheap restaurant. But, as to residence,—if any of your members who have gone into the question of residential flats, built with a view to profit, would care to extend his interest in the subject to the needs of McGill students, I shall be glad to put him in the way of a good thing. At Oxford and Cambridge the residential system has been carried to such lengths in the course of centuries that the colleges dominate the University, which exists as a separate corporation only for examinations, degrees and other general purposes. Here in Montreal things began the other way on. The University is firmly established, but the interests of the whole student body would be greatly advanced if we could now provide residential halls, like the dormitories at Harvard, Yale and Princeton. To me it seems just about the least we could do, looking to the formation of character—and it is perhaps all the more incumbent on us as we are forbidden by our constitution to have any definite church connection. Religious zeal is forbidden to us as a corporation, and we have to substitute for it what the late Archbishop of Canterbury said would do equally well, the cultivation of a "quiet sense of duty."

That is a point which could be easily elaborated, but I shall leave

you to fill in the outline for yourselves. You know what difficulties and temptations beset a young man who comes up to reside for the first time in a great centre of population such as this. It is not creditable to Montreal, in my judgment, that she should plume herself on having a great University which aims at playing an important part in our national life, and yet show such an utter disregard for the comfort and social well-being of its students. Some may think that, like others, students should take their chances, and learn in the school of experience. For immature young men that is emphatically a "fool-school," and the cost of tuition is excessive. Many fall by the way who could, under healthier conditions, be guided over the stony ground.

I think that this question of residence should receive the earliest possible attention from the friends of McGill. In any event, I hope that I have shown that the operations of a great university should be of interest to all sections of the community in which it is striving to do the work. In order to be of direct service we must be in close touch with popular needs. I have no fear of being considered "utilitarian." It is quite possible not to lose sight of the humanities and yet be practical. The conditions of modern life require, in all departments, a higher training than has been necessary in the past. Education has come to be increasingly indispensable for the efficient discharge of the duties of citizenship. You know what a great uplift for the whole country is secured when its educational standards are properly set. Universities are on the side of enlightenment, progress and truth. And I hope you share my view that what a modern university has to offer in the midst of a commercial city, so far from disqualifying a man for success in business, ought to help him forward, just as is the case with the professions.

W. PEARSON.